

# **SPEAK! OR ROLLOVER!**

## **THE CHOICE DOG OWNERS NEED TO MAKE**

Your kids went nuts for a dog at your local animal shelter. Your wife (or husband) didn't want to say so, but they were hooked on the dog, too. Faced with all that love, you paid little attention to the shelter's breed description of your dog. Who can know for sure what kind of dog it is anyway?

You move to a new town. You are walking your dog one day – look at him prance along, secured by his harness and six-foot leash – when you notice dirty looks from a neighbor.

Then you receive a notice that your backyard fencing is inadequate, or that your dog must wear a muzzle when not inside your home.

Or, worst of all, the authorities come to your home and inform you that you must remove your dog from the town, or surrender him to be killed.

### **Do these things happen in America?**

Yes, they do. These nightmares, and others like them, are the grim reality of breed-specific dog regulation. Across America, more than 300 communities have restricted or banned outright 36 different breeds of dogs. Is your dog obedience trained, a therapy dog, or just a spoiled couch potato? It may not matter. If your town decides that your dog is a member of any of the banned or restricted breeds, you will have fewer rights than your neighbor. Even if that neighbor allows his dog to run loose and become a nuisance in the community, or if he has chained his unsocialized dog in the far corners of his yard, his dog may still be viewed more favorably than your cherished, family companion. Towns and cities across America ban or restrict dogs, without regard to any actions of the dogs themselves, or the degree of care and control exercised by responsible owners.

Want to take your dog to visit a relative? Depending upon where your relatives live, you may be placing your beloved pet in jeopardy, because that community has enacted a broadly worded, draconian statute that targets all dogs that look like your dog.

**“...more than  
300 communities  
have restricted  
or banned  
outright 36  
different breeds  
of dogs.”**

Many people don't learn about breed specific legislation until a police officer or animal control officer knocks on their door and tells them the dog sitting on their couch has been declared a "dangerous" animal.

Once enacted, breed specific regulation is hard to repeal. The task force that studied dog issues in Prince George's County, Maryland, concluded that the county's breed ban was expensive and ineffective. It is still on the books. Denver's breed ban is the harshest in the country. Under its terms, authorities have killed thousands of dogs, many of whom were family companions.

The Netherlands is repealing its breed specific laws. Studies showed they did not lead to a decrease in

bite incidents. Instead, the Dutch will focus on enforcing leash laws and on promoting owner education programs.

### **What can you do?**

Know the animal ordinances in your town. Don't just be a good pet owner. Insist that your town hold all pet owners to the same high standards to which you hold yourself, whatever kind of dog they share their lives with.

Breed specific laws are cruel, and they don't make our communities safer. Humane care of companion animals does.

---

Karen Delise

**National Canine Research Council**

[www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com](http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com)

Published in *The American Dog Magazine* – Spring 2009

[www.theamericandogmag.com](http://www.theamericandogmag.com)